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Seated around our camp fire that night, Hamid burst into a long and rather plaintive song about our journey, of which I give a literal translation: 533 539 517

'Weary the traveller who leaves his home,
Saddened by comforts he has left behind;
Only the fool will brave the burning sun,
Searching for ghostly cities of the mind.

'Allah protect us from the djinns and fiends,
Spirits of evil who infest the dunes;
Let us return with haste to those we love,
And woo them with brave tales and manly tunes.'

We laughed loudly at this nostalgic chant, and the singer, eyeing us balefully for a moment, got up and retired to his tent. We had changed into Arab dress,* which is more comfortable in the desert than shorts and bush shirts, and there was little to distinguish either Schultz or myself from our companions. The scorching sun had burnt our faces a deep copper-brown, with white circles around our eyes, where they had been protected by sun-glasses. While Suliman prepared the evening meal, and Khofan bin Salim recited a long narrative poem which he had heard in Muscat—an Homeric tale of wifely infidelity—I read a chapter of the Koran.

Khofan was babbling on:

'Salaman heard—the Sea of his Soul was moved,
And bubbled up with jewels, and he said:
Oh Shah, I am the slave of Thy Desire,
Dust of the Throne ascending Foot am I.'

*The Arab cloak, or outer garment, is known as an *abbar*, and is usually of coarse linen, white, black or brown, sometimes edged with gold braid. The head-dress is composed of a square of fine muslin or Kashmir wool, and is worn under the black-braided *eggal*. In the Trucial Oman Coast this head-dress is known as a *ghatrah*, but in the Nejd and other parts of Arabia it is also called a *kufieyh*. It is worn by folding the *ghatrah* into a triangle, the base of which is placed across the forehead, the cloth being kept in place by the *eggal*. The ends of the *ghatrah* offer protection against insects, dust and the rays of the sun, and during a sand-storm are sometimes drawn across the mouth to form a veil. 291